

THE MANY FACETS OF



SHA ALI

OF AHMAD COUTURE

By Annabelle Marceno Pericin

New Delhi based Fashion Designer Sha Ali Ahmad of Ahmad Couture— better known as 'Sha', is sparkling his way through the fashion world with his trademark designs that are rich in color with intricate details. What also is rich is his artistic talent that led him to pursue a fashion career and launched his own label in 2013, Ahmad Couture. Sha defines that moment in his career the day he finally got his own identity.

You may have seen his designs but didn't know it as he has designed for Adrianna Pappel, and fashion houses in India that supplied his designs to Nordstrom, Bloomingdales, Lord & Taylor, Saks 5th Avenue, Neiman Marcus, and Cache just to name a few. His sense of style and his eye to detail has contributed to his long list of achievements. He has designed for Jane Prat (former owner of Jane and Sassy Magazine), Celebrity Makeup and Hairstylist Katie B. of Katie B. Cosmetics and his designs have been worn by celebrities including Jennifer Aniston, Courtney Cox, Somi Ali (Former Bollywood Actress in India) at events and venues all over the world. Sha was the featured designer at the first fashion show at the Kauai Beach Resort in Kapaa, Hawaii in 2013 and started Kauai Fashion Weekend. He elevated the fashion on this small island. 350 people including the mayor and governor attended his fashion show, and it is now an annual event. He calls Kauai, "My home away from home." His love for the island, its community and advocacy for community service, inspires him to participate in local events and donates his designs for charity auctions.

Sha's journey into fashion was not easy. "Nothing worth having comes easily," he recalls. "Earning a name is almost impossible coming from a very small town and chances are fairly slim." Sha's artistic talent started when he was three years old doing sketches and paintings and began selling his paintings at an early age. Without the strong support from his family, he wouldn't have pursued being a fashion designer. "At the end of the day, you have to pay your bills. At that time couture was not seen as a profession. As an artist, it's about how much are you going to sell your painting? My father would take me to different towns to have my art seen, I was selling my paintings but was not sure about my future", Sha explains. He went to college to get his bachelor degree in fine arts and graphics but an invitation to a fashion show by a friend changed his course. Right after the fashion show, Sha made the switch from art to fashion and went to the National Institute of Fashion Design (NIFD) where he received his design degree. As an artist, he was very into the creative side.

Making the decision and transitioning from painting to fashion was easy. Sha and his mom were very connected and when she passed in 2005 he thought about quitting

designing. She was very involved in his creative process. "When she passed away, I was in New Delhi working and I didn't get a chance to talk to her. But when the going gets tough the tough gets going. I am no quitter, I always challenge myself to better my craft, and this is where it lead me today."

Sha traveled for the first time to the United States as a fashion and textile guest lecturer to various universities. He now travels extensively spending three to four months a year between Miami, New York, Chicago, Las Vegas, Kauai and California meeting and designing for clients and showing his collections before heading back to New Delhi, India where he runs his business. He frequently visits his family in Jhansi, a countryside town about 600 miles from New Delhi. Sha estimates it's about 10-12 hours away with traffic.

New Delhi's connection to fashion is one of the reasons why Sha runs his business there. He draws his inspiration from the colors and sounds of the local markets where he shops for crystals and gemstones, and the most inspiring are the colors and styles of his local culture in addition to a multitude of cultures around the globe. He fuses his instinct, intuition, art and design into his fashion using fine Indian embroidery and diverse textiles. His specialty is unique when it comes to embroidery and silhouettes. His artistic instinct lets him design dresses based on pictures of clients he sees and he knows how to fit them based on face and body type.

Sha explains it can take 10 days to make a dress with that much detail. He has 4-5 people working from 9 a.m. to midnight everyday. He is always looking to incorporate technology and innovation to his designs; he describes his beading technique where they lock every inch ensuring that if a bead falls off, the entire string of beads will not fall off the dress.

As Sha moves forward creating his current collection under his own label, he expresses he would love to see his designs worn on the red carpet. "I aspire to make a woman feel beautiful in my designs regardless of whether she is on the red carpet, at a special occasion or any other life event," he adds. Sha lives in the moment and knows life is very unpredictable. Grounded in his spirituality, he declares, "God directs our lives and is watching us. I believe that whatever your destiny is, no one can take that away from you."



MUSE DEL MAR

Written & Styled by Beverly Zeiss

MODEL: Meghan King Edmonds

CREATIVE DIRECTOR: Erin Eckert

FEATURED DESIGNER: Sha Ali Ahmad

PHOTOGRAPHER: Mark Sacro

PHOTO ASSISTANT: Jaime Anderson

MUA/ HAIR STYLIST: Brie Leach Crouse

Shot on location at Studio Del Mar

at a private residence by Andrew Goetz, Architect

GEV had the pleasure of spending the day shooting his exquisite line and getting to know this intriguing personality. Somewhat quiet and unassuming, Sha surprises with his bold and colorful out-of-the box designs. We were awestruck by his eye-catching collection. What stands out are his attention to statement-making details as well as his meticulous beading and intricate embroidery, all created by hand in his small town. He loves to mentor and his goal is to teach his craft, helping to develop skills that create more jobs in India.

Sha's brilliance shines in using crystals, sequins, luxe laces, jewels, glass beads and small pieces of leather, placed strategically on otherwise sheer fabrics. He shows the contour of a woman without too much exposure. Each piece is his canvas and is completely unique. They are unconventional treasures, red carpet-worthy, but more importantly completely wearable. Sha's main inspiration for his creations are nature and the beauty of women. He fuses his intuition, instinct, art and design into unforgettable fashion. His striking pallet of color illuminates his intricate trademark designs.

Sha went to school for a degree in fine art, a far jump from the usual orthodox careers chosen in India such as law or medicine. He turned his passion for art into fashion, attending fashion design school at night, which led him to where he is today.

Sha has been designing for quite some time, creating for other well-known fashion labels. But he has been working diligently to establish his own identity and brand under the name of Ahmad Couture.

Now with his own label, he has designed for national and international pageant contestants and many celebrities including Jennifer Anniston and Courtney Cox. Several Bollywood stars have worn his creations as well bringing increased awareness to his brand. He loves to design for the red carpet, but is equally passionate about working with everyday women to make them feel beautiful.

We searched for just the right model to showcase his stunning work. We wanted someone with a zest for life, who was approachable and perhaps on the verge of becoming a household name to further assist in boosting Sha's identity in the United States. We were indeed lucky. With the newest member of the Real Housewives of Orange County cast, gorgeous yet down-to-earth Meghan King Edmonds was the perfect choice to document the long, lean and lens-ready silhouettes of Ahmad Couture for GEV.

Meghan is a force to be reckoned with. She speaks her mind, is feisty, and knows what she likes, but also has the personality and warmth to make you feel as though she is your new best friend. She was extremely excited when we unveiled his rack of creations and had a difficult time choosing her favorite. She wanted to try them all.

Sha offered to create a custom piece for her for which she was extremely grateful. We watched in awe as Sha sketched a design specifically for Meghan. It was finished in a flash, with every tiny detail drawn with intense focus. He is a genuine artist and it is amazing to see his creations come to life.

For both work and pleasure, Sha spends a lot of time in Hawaii, specifically the island of Kauai, where he has been instrumental in launching the annual Kauai Fashion Weekend. His love for the island, its beauty and its community has inspired him to visit year after year; he calls it his second home.

We will no doubt see Ahmad Couture become a household name in the not-so-distant future.

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